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THIS WEEK

Week by Week 419

The G.O.P. in the Midwest
by Victor C. Ferkiss 423

Ireland's Angry Young Men
by Michael P. Fogarty 426

Point of No Return
by John Cogley 428

Rebel of Another Generation
by Neville Braybrooke 429

The Stage
by Richard Hayes 431

The Screen
by Philip T. Hartung 432

Communications 433

Books 435

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

PRESENT STATE OF THE UNION

THE PRESIDENT'S State of the Union address was, in several respects, quite encouraging. It was encouraging, first of all, for the appearance President Eisenhower presented throughout a demanding performance. He was vigorous and effective and showed no apparent signs of his recent ailment. Since the implementation of the program he presented will depend so heavily upon him, this reassurance must be welcome not only to Congress but to the entire nation.

Before he presented the "outline of action" which was the core of his address, the President briefly stated the facts and assumptions upon which this outline was based. Of the tasks which now confront the United States, two are of such major dimensions that they far outweigh all others: we must first "ensure our safety through strength"; and secondly, we must do the "constructive work of building a genuine peace." The threat to safety and peace is simply stated, the President declared: it is Soviet imperialism.

Given world conditions as they now exist, much of the strength upon which we base our safety will necessarily be military. "But," said the President, striking a note that was to recur frequently through his address, "we could make no more tragic mistake than merely to concentrate on military strength. For if we did only this, the future would hold nothing for the world but an Age of Terror."

While we work to build up our defenses "we must never become so preoccupied with our desire for military strength that we neglect those areas of economic development, trade, diplomacy, education, ideas and principles where the foundation of real peace must be laid."

The President was more optimistic concerning our present strength than were most post-sputnik commentators. Nevertheless there was a warning that we must do much more than we are doing, that the rate of progress since sputnik is gratifying but insufficient. And he voiced fear that some people would wish to finance some of the increased military expenditures by cutting back on economic assistance, an act that would "be nothing less than reckless folly."

THE PRESIDENT then proceeded to enumerate his eight-point outline of imperative actions. These included a defense reorganization to do away with interservice rivalry; a speed-up in defense production; continued investment in mutual aid; broadened world trade; increased scientific cooperation with our allies; more Federal aid for education and basic research; closer attention to priorities in spending and saving; and, finally, cooperation between countries on various works of peace.

It would be unrealistic to expect any State of the Union address to please all its hearers and, despite the warm reception given to the President, this address had its immediate and compelling critics. Democrats in Congress welcomed his stress on the need for defense spending and indications are that they may go beyond his recommendations. The reorganization of the Pentagon has long been called for, but the chiefs of the Army, Navy and Air Force have, since the address, spoken out against any fundamental revision at present.

Foreign aid has always had its vocal critics and, in spite of the President's strong plea not to kill a needful project by catchwords and slogans, objections to increasing a "give-away" program are sure to come from conservative strongholds. The program for aid to education is little more than a repetition of an inadequate plan that has already come under fire. And the implicit promise to make

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these greater efforts within the terms of a balanced budget arouses a large measure of skepticism.

The President's address was, thus, inadequate in some respects, and he must use the power and prestige of his office to see that the needed measures have a fighting chance against the strong opposition they are due to encounter.

The encouraging aspects, however, do remain. Though clouded in phrases of optimism, there was self-criticism because the Soviet Union was allowed to take the lead in significant military and scientific areas and because the present Administration failed to realize the psychological potential of the first earth satellite. There was also the repeated, urgent recognition that we must improve our economic, diplomatic, trade and educational relations with other countries. We hope the President will support these measures with the same vigor with which he proposed them.

NO SIGNS OF CRUMBLING

IF MARXIST orthodoxy is to be believed, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is but a passing phase to be succeeded by an era of justly distributed plenty. There would no longer be need of maintaining law and order by force. Little in recorded history tends to intimate that such an idyllic state could be attained by any country—least of all by Communist lands, where State power has grown progressively stronger and more all-embracing.

But if the Western nations have not been prepared to witness the Russian State's "withering away" in orthodox Marxist fashion, we appear to have been counting on some sort of anti-regime internal upheaval and collapse. To men blessed with democratic liberties it is inconceivable that fellow-men would put up indefinitely with a system that so flagrantly and continuously deprives them of their fundamental human rights. Accordingly, the indicated policy would be simply for us to hold on firmly, not yielding any more ground, until the day of the inevitable upheaval.

The evidence grows that such expectations are unwarranted. The Soviet Union has made such demonstrations of its stability and prowess in the past few months as to call for top-to-toe reappraisals in Washington. Communist China in its own way supplies similar evidence. The contrast between the indignities visited upon its citizens and the self-confidence of the Mao regime in its stability and strength could hardly be more striking.

China is a land of six hundred fifty million human beings which is not in a position to sustain its population. To the proverbial blights of floods and drought that from time to time ravage whole provinces have now been added the hardships arising from the government's determination to build up heavy industry at any cost. Moreover, "thought control" has been brought to a pitch of perfection undreamed of by the dictatorships of two decades back. At the moment a systematic party purge is under way there, province by province. It has also been decreed that all Chinese have to carry passports in order to move about within the borders of their own country. This is said to be aimed partly at former bureaucrats who might seek to desert the farms to which so many of them have recently been sent and assigned to hard manual labor.

The result of all this deprivation, surveillance and sentencing to forced labor is a docile citizenry whose discipline and cleanliness are reportedly superior to anything found elsewhere in all Asia—and a regime aware that it has an ever firmer grip on the reins. There may be less individual revolutionary fervor, but neither the U.S.S.R. nor the Chinese "Peoples Republic" shows the smallest signs of cracking.

The United States, then, can no longer simply temporize. Soviet Russia and Communist China are powers that must be dealt with for what they are and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. The fact that they are expansionist powers bent on extensive domination makes a realistic policy revision all the more essential. This hardly implies abandoning "containment" in favor of "disengagement." But it does throw new light on the probable effects of America's reluctance to negotiate up to now.

THE POPE AND THE SOVIET

RECENT NEWSPAPER reports from Moscow say that the Soviet Union has offered to establish "contact" with the Vatican on questions of peace. The overture was reportedly made to a left-wing delegation from Italy by Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, and thus, whatever else it was, the suggestion was probably calculated to help the Communists in that country by "proving" that the Soviet Union is not really hostile to religion.

In making his offer, Mr. Gromyko praised the Pope for taking what he described as positions parallel to those of the Soviet Union on nuclear weapons and warfare in general. It would be good news if the views of the Soviet Union and those of

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the Pope did coincide on these matters, but the fact is, of course, that this is simply not so. In messages that make quite clear his awareness of the Soviet threat, the Pope has always stressed the right of nations to defend themselves from attack, and the duty of other nations to assist those who suffer unjust aggression. On nuclear weapons he has advocated limitation and an end to the arms race, but he has insisted on the need for adequate controls to make sure that such limitation is carried out, and it is precisely on this point that the Russians have always refused to go along.

All in all, not much is likely to come of Mr. Gromyko's suggestion. The Soviet Union has for a long time been quoting Papal statements on peace out of context for its own purposes. Under the circumstances, the Vatican is unlikely to regard this latest Moscow statement as anything but another propaganda maneuver.

DIMMER PROSPECTS

AMERICAN business and labor leaders tend to take a rather sober view of the opportunities for employment and profit in this country for the next few months. Earlier interruptions in the march of national prosperity since World War II have been so short and slight that the prediction of four and one-half million unemployed Americans by next month is rather startling. And to this must be added anxiety over the cumulative effects of the shorter work weeks instituted by some important industries to cope with a shrinking demand.

To say that some industries are thriving while others have receded from their peak does not, in this instance, spell continuing national prosperity. The workers who are laid off, for instance, because highways and schools use less structural steel than factories and office buildings have that much less to spend on the products of other industries—and so the snowball of lay-offs and shorter work weeks grows. The severe drop in the prices of securities is another sign in the wind. When a periodical such as *Newsweek* takes note of the possibility of playing safe by investing in gems, precious metals and works of art (indicating that the values of French postimpressionist and impressionist paintings have stood up best), it recalls the way men of wealth sought to protect their fortunes in the depression.

In a mixed economy such as ours there have to be recurring readjustments. Unbroken economic progress comparable to the steady human advance envisioned by certain nineteenth century philosophers is hardly to be expected here below. The question is whether the decline in the national economy has not gone so far out of control as to demand the application of major federal remedies. Aided by steadily growing potential consumer demand and by social security benefits and other New Deal and Fair Deal buttresses, the Eisenhower businessman's administration appears to be challenged to bring into play a whole series of tax, credit and more ambitious remedial techniques. This would form an integral part of enlightened leadership in the defense of the free world.

RALLYING THE PEOPLE

IN RECENT WEEKS we have commented several times on the dangers of an exclusively military reaction to sputnik. There are strong indications that many Congressmen will vote for increased military spending but are determined to slash at the Administration's mutual security, trade and foreign aid programs. The last time Mr. Eisenhower's proposals on these subjects were under attack, he made the mistake of adopting a too-conciliatory attitude toward reluctant Congressmen. This time there are signs that he is prepared to carry the fight for what he needs to the people.

One reassuring indication that the President is not prepared to let the economizers have everything their own way is his recently announced plan for a national non-partisan conference to be organized and headed by Eric A. Johnston. This effort would be participated in by leaders from all walks of life, and its prime purpose would be to awaken the nation to the dangers of the economic warfare presently being waged by the Soviet Union. By such means the President clearly hopes to rally public support for the Administration's plans, particularly for the mutual security program which is expected to come under heavy attack in Congress.

The proposed national conference, then, is clearly one that deserves support. As plans for it are being developed, however, we hope the President and Administration officials will ponder some remarks made by *Time* and *Life* publisher Henry Luce in the course of a speech delivered recently at the University of Pennsylvania. As it was outlined in the State of the Union message, Mr. Luce said, President Eisenhower's program of foreign economic aid suffers from a serious ambiguity: "It is big enough to be an annoyance to the taxpayers, but not big enough to develop any real enthusiasm either at home or abroad. We should either

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abandon foreign economic aid or do a really effective job of it."

Mr. Luce has a good point here, we think. Mr. Eisenhower has won a well-deserved reputation as a conciliator, but on questions like mutual security, foreign aid and reciprocal trade, what is often called "compromise" means only a program that satisfies no one and accomplishes only a fraction of what needs to be done.

THE LAST *DAILY WORKER*

THE LAST issue of the *Daily Worker* appeared on Monday, January 13. It has folded, according to its own statement, because of increasing costs and debts. As much as we can sympathize with any publication that must fight rising costs, we can feel little regret about the passing of the *Daily Worker*, nor do we think that rising costs sufficiently account for its demise.

The reasons are more clearly discernible in the statements of John Gates, who announced his resignation from the Communist Party simultaneously with his resignation from the editorship of the *Daily Worker*. Mr. Gates had been the leader of a faction within the Communist Party which demanded a greater measure of freedom. He lost to those who advocated the traditional line of subservience to the Soviet Union.

Among Mr. Gates' most interesting statements are the following: "The Communist Party has ceased to be an effective force for democracy, peace and socialism in the United States." "The Communist Party has been isolated from the American people by our foolishnesses and stupidities." He further said that the chief weakness of the international Communist movement was a "lack of political democracy."

Mr. Gates' defection from the Party is one of many, more significant than most, and his criticisms are those of a man who has not been entirely blinded to the facts of recent history. Those whom he leaves behind continue their traditional subservience to a totalitarian regime. We cannot regret the passing of an organ that would disseminate their views.

U.S. MOTHERS IN CHINA

IT SEEMS to us that most people, regardless of nationality, cannot help but feel compassion for the three American mothers who recently traveled to Communist China to visit their captive sons. It is natural that newspapers in the United States would carry many stories and pictures about the trip, but we hope that publications abroad have also been covering the story. Many of our allies have long felt that United States policy on China is intransigent and unimaginative; no matter how one feels about the Communists, their diplomats say, the fact is that the Communist regime is in control of the mainland and shows no signs of falling. There is, of course, much to be said for this point of view, and it has been discussed in articles in this magazine. But we still hope that foreign papers are covering the journey of the American mothers and that diplomatic corps around the world are taking note. Our friends abroad should know what people in the United States think about the way our citizens have been treated by the Communist regime. There may not be much Americans can do about the situation, but they will not easily forget it when questions like recognition or admission to the U.N. come up. Those who say we must face the facts of international life are quite correct, but popular sentiment in the U.S. happens to be a fact too, and it is one diplomats should not overlook.

WHATEVER IT MEANS, IT'S NEWS

WE CALL attention to the following item, perversely, perhaps, as an example of a fascinating but meaningless news report. According to an A.P. dispatch, a Denver publisher recently addressed an Arkansas Press Association convention, in Little Rock, on the repercussions of the Little Rock school integration crisis, and twenty-six persons walked out on him. This looks like a noteworthy piece of news, but its significance, and a local paper's headlines, "26 Editors Walk Out on Anti-Bias Speech," lose some of their impact when one reads further. The twenty-six who walked out—not necessarily all editors, it develops—were matched by two hundred and twenty-five—also not necessarily all editors—who did not walk out. This might still be worthy of notice, and perhaps a head like "Majority of Arkansans Accept Anti-Bias Speech," except that one of the non-walkers out offering a smiling reception to the anti-segregation speech, was none other than Governor Orval Faubus!

At this point we broke off our speculations, and to the Associated Press we say thanks but they needn't have bothered.

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The G.O.P. in the Midwest

No meaningful appraisal of Midwest politics is possible unless one first discards the unrealistic image of Midwest Republicanism that is widely held

by VICTOR C. FERKISS

FOR THE FIRST time in twenty-five years, Wisconsin last fall elected a Democrat to the United States Senate. This victory of William Proxmire over Republican Walter Kohler, Jr., for the unexpired Senate term of the late Joe McCarthy confounded the experts. Anti-Eisenhower Republicans were eager to attribute the upset to deliberate sabotage of the Republican ticket by disgruntled conservatives who stayed home election day. Democrats saw in it a portent of Democratic victories to come in Wisconsin, a state which they labeled traditionally Republican.

Neither explanation is wholly satisfactory. There is some truth in the contention that much of Proxmire's success was the result of Republican dissension and apathy, and he will undoubtedly have a tough row to hoe in 1958 if Wisconsin Republicans unite. But this does not make his victory any the less real or significant. Those who see in it evidence of a political trend are right, but for the wrong reasons. It is true that the Democratic party has never amounted to much in Wisconsin in modern times (though F.D.R. did carry the state three times and Wilson and Truman each carried it once). What is too often overlooked, however, is the fact that Wisconsin's Republicanism, like that of the other Upper Midwestern states, is Republicanism of a very special kind.

The image of Midwestern Republicanism held by most Americans is a grossly oversimplified one. Americans tend to assume that the politician who most nearly typifies the Republican party throughout the whole vast area from North Dakota to Ohio is someone like Jenner or Bricker—reactionary, isolationist, and intent on recreating the days of "normalcy" under the leadership of men of the caliber of Harding or McKinley. In recent years this popular image of Midwest Republicanism has been given a new dimension through the appearance on the political scene of Joe McCarthy, whose activities served to add an element of sinister dynamism to this picture of anachronistic standpatness.

No meaningful appraisal of Midwest politics is possible unless one first discards this unrealistic image of Midwest Republicanism and the equally unrealistic picture of a monolithic Midwest which underlies it. There is not one Midwest but many. Although it is just as impossible to delimit them exactly as it is to set the precise boundaries of the Midwest as a whole, the fact of diversity is indisputable.

There are vast topographical and economic differences between the arid Plains states and the more fertile corn and hog country further east, and the psychological distance separating the Northwoods of Minnesota from the border state of Missouri is at least as great as the physical distance. The typical Midwesterner is not likely to be a gaunt Anglo-Saxon straight out of a Grant Woods painting: foreign tongues are in evidence in the country as well as in the large cities, for the rural Midwest probably contains more self-sustaining enclaves of foreign culture than does any other part of the nation—whole counties from Minnesota as far south as Kansas are often dominated by a single inbred ethnic group. Nor is the Midwesterner necessarily a farmer: Cleveland, Chicago, and the mines of Minnesota are also a part of the Midwest and the region as a whole is highly urban and industrial.

DESPITE THIS diversity, the Midwest (the border states and some cities aside) has for the last half-century exhibited one common characteristic—its generally Republican political allegiance. But if there are many Midwests, so, too, there are many kinds of Midwestern Republicanism. Ohio, Indiana and Illinois have long been controlled by the kind of alliance which

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most non-Midwesterners would consider to be typical of Midwestern Republicanism—an alliance between prosperous farmers, large industrialists, and Main Street —that is an alliance of the groups which constitute the bulwarks of the Republican party throughout the nation generally. This "eastern" Midwest has never been the scene of any serious revolt against this dominant Republican combination save for such isolated instances as the tenure of "Golden Rule" Jones in Toledo. And the recent defeat of the bipartisan Charterforces in Cincinnati would seem to indicate that the spirit of the late Senator Robert A. Taft still predominates over the reformist urges represented by his brother Charles P. Taft, a Charterite leader.

Plains states' Republicanism, however, has been of a quite different cast. The Republicanism of Nebraska, Kansas and even prosperous Iowa was for many years a thorn in conservative Republican hides. Though normally unwilling to support a Democratic party identified with the hated Confederacy, the embattled farmers of the Plains states in the thirty years following the Civil War eagerly embraced the Granger movement, the Greenback party, and Populism, and could even be persuaded to swallow a Democratic ticket when it was headed by an agrarian radical of the stamp of William Jennings Bryan.

Since 1900 the states of the Upper Midwest—Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North Dakota—have provided Republican conservatives with many of their most severe headaches. Prior to 1896 the Democrats had met with some success in Wisconsin and Minnesota, but in that year the Upper Midwest rejected Bryan, who was identified with the radicalism of the more arid Plains states. The defeat of Bryan was followed by the virtual extinction of the Democratic party in the Upper Midwest. For some time prosperity continued to stave off radicalism in these states, but gradually grievances accumulated against the railroads, Wall Street financiers and local big business.

These resentments found their expression not in a swing to the Democratic party but within Republican ranks. The Democratic party was now too weak and, after 1917, too identified with Wilson's war policies (resented almost to a man by the bitterly isolationist Midwestern Progressives) to provide an effective or acceptable instrument for the rising revolt. As a result, during the twenties the Republican parties of Wisconsin and North Dakota were far to the left not only of the Republican but also of the Democratic party nationally. In 1924 it was a party machine under the domination of nominal Republicans that delivered Wisconsin's thirteen electoral votes for Progressive presidential candidate Robert M. LaFollette.

Populism and Progressivism bequeathed to the Midwest a mixed heritage and Midwestern politics cannot be understood without reference to this legacy. Although we tend to think of Populism and the Progressivism which succeeded it as "liberal" reform movements and although these movements did indeed espouse radical political and economic changes the Populist ideology can in many respects hardly be classified as liberal.

POPULISM as an organized political force had but a brief history—flourishing less than a decade before its absorption in the Bryan crusade of 1896. However, the peculiar syndrome which constituted the Populist ideology has long continued to be a potent factor in Midwestern politics. It combines such disparate elements as anti-big-business radicalism, social conservatism, xenophobia and isolationism, and distrust of such liberal institutions as a free press and an independent judiciary. The Populists and their spiritual heirs sought to create for themselves a society of small freehold capitalists, tilling their own soil, free from rigid class distinctions, and preserving their traditional lower middle class mores with regard to the family, religion, and morals. Their *bête noire* was modern industrial capitalism and its cultural concomitants. They feared that their economic independence was being destroyed by Eastern finance capitalism, the railroads, and the trusts—all symbolized by Wall Street. They feared corruption of their social and moral order by the city-slicker and the new immigration of Catholics and Jews—for which New York City provided the symbol *par excellence*. To preserve their way of life they sought to gain control of the government in order to bring it into closer harmony with the will of "the people," i.e., the "real Americans" such as themselves. They resented those liberal Constitutional guarantees which impeded this process by placing limits on the operation of direct majoritarian democracy and regarded them as so many breastworks thrown up by the enemy to protect his entrenched position.

Though differing slightly in its social base, the later Midwestern "Progressive" movement of the turn of the century sought the same ends as had the Populists and through the same means. The rule of "the people" was facilitated through the institution of such political devices as the referendum and the recall, the direct election of Senators and the direct primary. In addition, the Progressives sought to bring the judiciary under popular control and it is noteworthy that both Theodore Roosevelt and Robert LaFollette advocated the reversal of judicial decisions by popular referenda.

Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose party was dominated by an urbane and upper-class Eastern brand of Progressivism, and his support of intervention in World War I marked the final break between the Eastern and Midwestern wings of the Progressive movements. For Midwestern Progressives, America's intervention in World War I was simply another plot of Wall Street.

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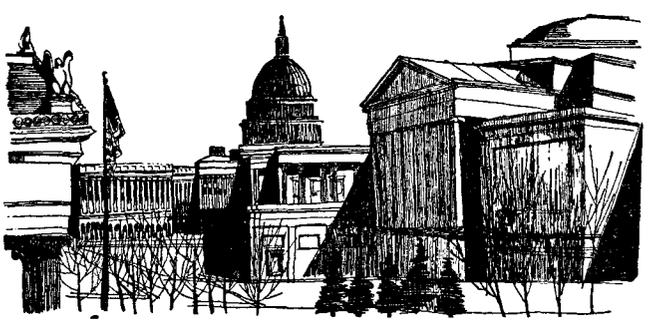
Opposition to the war on the part of such Progressive leaders in Congress as LaFollette and Charles Lindbergh, Sr., earned them the lasting support of the German, the Scandinavian, and much of the Irish vote in the Upper Midwest. It was this alliance of the old agrarian radicals, certain ethnic groups, and some elements of labor which became the backbone of the isolationist, anti-big-business third party movements of the Upper Midwest—the Minnesota Farmer-Labor party, the Non-Partisan League of North Dakota, and the Wisconsin Progressives.

Although their economic radicalism should logically have drawn the heirs of the Populist tradition toward the Democratic camp, they tended to eschew Democratic banners—originally because of identification of the Democratic party with the cause of the South in the Civil War, and later because of the interventionist policies of post-1916 Democratic administrations. The result was that during the twenties and thirties the Progressives constituted a faction—often the dominant one—within the local Republican party or operated under the aegis of a separate third party. But with the approach of World War II many Progressives felt obliged to choose between their distrust of Eastern finance capitalism and their largely ethnically-motivated isolationism.

Franklin Roosevelt became the symbol not only of economic reform but of a pro-British, anti-German foreign policy. In North Dakota the Non-Partisan League continued to work for the cause both of isolationism and economic reform within the state's Republican party. But the Progressives and the Farmer-Laborites began to fall apart as their members rallied either to Republican or to Democratic candidates depending upon whether their major concern was isolationism or economic reform. The Republicans were the immediate gainers in terms of votes since most of the rank and file regarded non-intervention as the paramount political issue. In Minnesota, following the war, the remnants of the Farmer-Labor organization took the party label with them into the Democratic camp, while in Wisconsin the remaining Progressives, lead by Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr., officially reentered the Republican fold in 1946.

The resentments that were engendered in the Upper Midwest by the two World Wars have been slow to die, but the Proxmire victory strongly suggests that much of the old repugnance to Democratic foreign policies has finally been subordinated to bread-and-butter considerations. Actually this process of Democratic absorption of Midwest agrarian radicalism has been going on for some time, though at an uneven rate. In Minnesota in 1946 the merged Democratic-Farmer-Labor party nominated and elected Hubert Humphrey to the United States Senate. More recently this political combination was successful in securing the governorship for their candidate, Orville Freeman, and today Minnesota's Congressional delegation is Democratic by a margin of five to four.



In neighboring North Dakota the Republican party, long dominated by the Non-Partisan League, has been both isolationist and left-wing. Senator William Langer is not just one of the Senate's most ardent nationalists: he was also a leader in the fight against the Dixon-Yates contract and can boast the poorest record of party regularity in voting of any Republican in the upper house. In 1956 the Non-Partisan League supported Stevenson and helped the Democratic Senatorial candidate Quentin Burdick (son of an incumbent Republican Congressman) to make a strong showing.

In Wisconsin, in 1946, Senator Robert LaFollette, Jr., was defeated for the Republican nomination by Joseph R. McCarthy, an erstwhile Democrat who received support from Wisconsin Communists, who resented LaFollette's isolationist and anti-Communist stands. McCarthy's later crusades against supposed Communists at Harvard and in the State Department expressed not only the old Populist-Progressive suspicion of the Eastern upper classes but also served to justify Midwestern mistrust of Democratic foreign policies. But even in Wisconsin lingering resentment over Wilson's and Roosevelt's wars has apparently proved less strong and lasting than economic appeals, and Proxmire secured majorities in most of the old strongholds of LaFollette Progressivism.

The process of the incorporation of Midwest Progressives into Democratic ranks has undoubtedly been speeded up by the fact that Eisenhower's Progressive Republicanism has little in common with traditional Midwestern Progressive Republicanism. Insofar as the Eisenhower Modern Republicanism is anything more than a press agent's gimmick, it is an expression of the urban, internationalist, and civil liberties consciousness of Wall Street and the Ivy League, and in some respects strongly resembles Theodore Roosevelt's "New Nationalism." The Progressive heritage of the Upper Midwest is more a legacy from Robert LaFollette, Sr., than from Theodore Roosevelt and indications are the Progressives are finding the atmosphere more congenial in Democratic than in Republican ranks, modern or otherwise.

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Today all the signs
point to the coming of a new age

Ireland's Angry Young Men

by MICHAEL P. FOGARTY

A MAN CALLED Fogarty who claims to be casting a foreign, impartial eye over Ireland is apt to arouse suspicion of his *bona fides*. Nevertheless I wish to give testimony firstly, that I am indeed a foreigner who has not lived in Ireland since he was seven, and secondly that every time I go back there I find the Irish less and less like the decadent, petty-bourgeois, priest-ridden, quaint, leprechaun-worshipping ex-gunmen popularized among us by the Dublin intellectuals and the American folklore anthropologists. Mind you, I doubt if they ever were like that. There was an anthropological study published the other day on a village in the English Lake District. I have a colleague who comes from up there, and after reading this study he came to me with a thoughtful air. Why, he said, here are all the tales my father used to fix the tourists up with in the pub: he's swallowed the lot. A lot of tourists, including some who now hold Chairs of Anthropology, seem to have swallowed, if not the lot, at least a tale or two in the pubs in Ireland.

However things may have been in the past, today the leprechaun and Black-and-Tan theory is totally out of date. There are in Ireland all the signs of a transition to a new age. There is an older generation still in power, the men of 1916 to 1921, and, true enough, they are still bemused with their glorious past. There has been no Stalin in Ireland to bury the Old Bolsheviks and get on with the present day. But the greatest of them, De Valera, is an old man now, and many of those who fought with him are gone. And behind them is rising up that infallible sign of change, a generation dissatisfied with the ways of the past, a generation of genuinely Angry Young Men.

Much of their energy, so far, has been misdirected into the old, destructive channels that the heroes of the Civil War have so long glorified to them. A bit of rioting on the Border, a few wires cut or freight wagons off the rails, even perhaps a shot fired to escape capture: these things one might forgive. But there has been deliberate, cold-blooded murder as well: the trap laid, the innocent man lured into it, the shot fired without the chance of reply. That is beyond forgiveness, and it is also utterly unconstructive. A year or two ago the Border, in many small ways and some large, was crumbling. The I.R.A. have repaired it again, high, strong, and fortified.

ONE SHOULD not forget, however, that the anger of the angry young men is in itself a good sign: a sign of impatience with the old in politics and social affairs, and a demand that something be done. Such an attitude is unconstructive, in the long run, only if there are no constructive channels into which it can be turned. And the most hopeful thing in Ireland is that such channels are opening now on all sides. There is a wave of adult education sweeping over Ireland now, in town and country alike: would that we had the like in England. The universities have a hand in it; so has the Church; so have a number of voluntary bodies like the European Movement. You will find farmers in the classes, trade unionists, managers, even politicians.

I like particularly the extension movement, with teaching in social science and agriculture, that has gone out from University College, Cork, and has already graduated some hundreds of tomorrow's rural leaders in the South-West. But this preference is strictly marginal: there are half-a-dozen other movements equally worth mentioning.

The universities themselves are patchy, good in parts. But one of their recognised colleges, Maynooth. which is also a Pontifical University on its own, is outstanding. The Irish clergy has had a bad press in the past, not always without justification. But you have only to visit Maynooth to feel happy enough about its future. The place is fairly bubbling with life. Five (I think that is the number) learned journals are published from it, and ideas are whirling around in it in history or philosophy or social affairs, including religious sociology. And Maynooth stands not only for spiritual strength and intellectual culture but for a civilized, which is not at all to say unspiritual, amenity of life.

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As for a more secular kind of culture, there are to be two if not three new weeklies starting in Ireland in the spring, each with at least some chance of success: youth, brains, and money in the bank. The interest in social and economic affairs is reflected in the fact that the boom topic in Irish adult education is principles of social action. The Irish Management Institute felt that something ought to be done to raise the country's admittedly low standard of industrial and commercial management. So a short time ago it bought the best man the British Institute of Management could offer—at any rate, the man the B.I.M. had put in charge of its own training schemes—and set him to work on a program intended to extend interest and knowledge in management. It has begun well and promises still better.

The rural life movement, *Muintir na Tire,* goes methodically on, parish by parish and county by county, with its task of bringing back to the countryside neighborliness, mutual aid, and understanding of what the countryman can do for himself and others in the modern world. As for the Farmers' Union, it is led vigorously enough to wake the dead. I will not comment on the views of those who think that that is just about the job it has to do.

BUT TO me the most encouraging sign is the way that Ireland is beginning to open onto the world. The movement for the European Free Trade Area and the Common Market has helped. It has caught the imagination of Ireland, and I find far less there than in England of the drab feeling that we'd sooner not go in but we can't help following the rest. There are Irish businessmen who do not like European free trade. But there are others, and powerful ones, who see great possibilities in it, and the farmers are with them.

But it is not only economics that have led to Ireland's new opening on the world. The European movement itself has political implications, especially for the Border, that many Irish people find attractive. The larger unity of Europe may well prove the key to the smaller unity of Ireland. The Commonwealth has its attractions too, now that countries like India are in it and Ireland's refusal to join NATO is less uncriticized than it was. But it is Continental Europe that more and more has the pull. Ireland has always had something of a Continental culture. One is not surprised to see a carafe of wine on the table in a Dublin restaurant where its opposite number in England would be offering tea. And today many people in Ireland are looking for more than wine from the Continent. What about borrowing a few ideas from the Dutch or the Swiss, they are beginning to ask, not only about farming, but about how to keep Calvinists and Catholics happy as fellow-citizens?

And why not offer some Irish leadership in return, in Western Europe or elsewhere, above all, non-governmental leadership? There are plenty of people still in Ireland who see nothing but evil, even though inevitable evil, in emigration. But there are more and more who see and value and wish to exploit the possibilities of leadership open to the Irish professional man who is free to come and go in the Commonwealth—in Africa, for instance, or South-East Asia—yet is not tarred with the brush of British colonialism.

There are the missionaries: Ireland is one of the greatest missionary countries in the world, and much thinking is being done about missionary problems. It is being stressed in Ireland more than it used to be that it was after all the rank and file Irish emigrant (the "low Irish," "tattered and torn as if from a battle," as reports of a hundred years ago used to call them, herded among the rats and cholera of the cellars of Liverpool or New York) who built or rebuilt the Church in America, England, and Australasia.

Leadership in the world, people in Ireland are also beginning to see, needs to be given by representatives of parties and movements as well as by individuals. It used to be rather discouraging to note the absence of Ireland at gatherings of the Christian social movements in Western Europe. But that too, I think, is going to change. It seems to me a great thing that so many Irish now think of their country as having, not a grudge against the world and an excuse for sulking in a corner, but a vocation to world leadership.

Much of what I have described is no more than beginnings. But these beginnings, I think, have a solid foundation. There is more than mere talk; something is being done. The long evening, when those who won the battle for Irish freedom rested on their laurels, is over. Let us speak no ill of them, for their laurels were well-earned. But it was time for them to go. The country has got back its breath and built up new stores of energy. The Angry Young Men are taking over: and let us not forget the women, for there are some notable women about. Ireland, I suspect, is about to explode into a new, great age of growth.

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POINT OF NO RETURN

WE ARE at a dividing point in the history of the world. Again mankind has eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Whatever happens in the future, we know now how to destroy ourselves. It is a knowledge that not only we but the generations which follow us are going to have to live with. The awful national secrets of destruction that have been guarded so desperately throughout the last decade will soon be generally known.

We seem, then, to be faced with inescapable alternatives: either man will bring about his own destruction or will advance in civilization to a point where he can live with the frightful knowledge that from now on is forever his. Our generation is now making the decision.

At one time the question may have been pacifism versus militarism; it is no longer. Now it is life versus death. For all practical purposes war has been ruled out as a means for settling future disputes. The all-out holocaust means that both sides at best will share a bitter "victory," their own destruction. And the "limited" war which some see as an alternative can only end in an indecisive conclusion, like the settlement in Korea, for neither side will accept a clear defeat while it holds back its nuclear weapons.

It seems then that there is nothing more we can do with war but end it or let it end us. War no longer serves any conceivable end. In nuclear bombs men have found a new absolute.

Winston Churchill said that it was the American monopoly of atomic bombs which kept the peace in Europe during the postwar forties. Walter Millis has suggested that the nuclear stalemate between the U.S. and Russia has kept peace since. Clearly we have been living on borrowed time. We still are. But what other way is there for us to live at the present? We are doomed to live like this until the decision to put war behind us—by "we" I mean mankind—is finally made.

That decision can not be an American nor a Russian nor even a joint Soviet-American decision; it must be the decision of all mankind. The decision will be made in time. That is sure. But the question is, will it be made now before the final holocaust or will it be made amidst the devastation that will follow another war? Will intelligence or frightful experience set the clock?

I would not want to bet on intelligence, there seems to be so little of it around. Here we are somberly debating whether or not we want to cause our own destruction. I suppose that if a thoughtful creature from outer space were to study us he would say we were the most irrational of creatures.

It is not any lack of appreciation for the absurdity of the situation that keeps me out of the pacifists' camp. It is, rather, an acceptance of the role the irrational plays in the affairs of men. I suspect that fear will do the work that all the wit and piety of the moralists through the ages never succeeded in doing; it will ultimately eliminate war. The question is *when*? In a chorus we all cry out "Now."

Now, indeed. But who is to take the lead? If the Russians meant what they said about loving peace and putting war out of their minds, and if we meant what we said, and each believed the other, then we would have no problem. But we do not believe each other and while the game goes on, those who are engaged in it had better play it or take a chance on losing everything. If I find myself, pistol in hand, up against another person with a pistol, the two of us have obviously reached an impasse which will end either in disaster or in a fear-inspired "rational" solution. But if I am going to throw my pistol away and depend on his good will not to shoot, I had better be sure he is a man of his word or at least be sure that for reasons of his own he will act rationally.

William Lee Miller, in the first issue of *Worldview,* points out that the morality we are seeking must be based on an understanding and appreciation of the "art of the possible" which is politics. It will not do, says Mr. Miller, for moralists to recommend courses of action which are impossible; he cites the recent proposal of a prominent theologian that we fling ourselves (and our allies) on the mercy of Divine Providence. This is a kind of "conscientious" luxury in which we should not indulge. If the advice were taken seriously and Americans were to strip themselves of nuclear defenses, we would be opening the door to frightful consequences for ourselves and those who depend on us. But it is wholly improbable, to say the least, that the nation would agree to any such proposal; to propose it seriously then is to offer a solution which is useless to those actually burdened with day-to-day decisions.

There is much to be said for Miller's argument that the ethical solution, if it is found, will be worked out by those who are not absolutely intent on being "ethical," that the moral solution will escape those who concentrate exclusively on abstract "morality." It is not a question of abandoning moral principle. It is a question of finding how to serve the claims of seemingly conflicting principles. Politics is prudence and prudence is politics.

JOHN COGLEY.

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Siegfried Sassoon has always had a small but enthusiastic body of readers

Rebel of Another Generation

by NEVILLE BRAYBROOKE

PARLOR-MAIDS have a habit of announcing visitors in tones that are exactly right; their voices invariably assign each guest his appointed place in the social scale of things. In some ways their calling resembles that of the medieval herald. Now Parker, in the earlier part of this century, was such a parlor-maid. When she announced "Mr. Siegfried Sassoon" her voice would tally, to use a phrase of Osbert Sitwell's, with "the sound of a poet kicking in vain against a horse-box together with a suggestion of irregular political opinions."

Again, Frank Swinnerton in his reminiscences of the Georgian literary scene has recalled how the poetry of Siegfried Sassoon became for him particularly connected with the term "my generation." For perhaps the most important thing to remember about this poet is that he was always a rebel—a reputation known to kitchen staffs as well as to the staffs of the stodgy and more established journals of the period.

And yet, in retrospect, Sassoon, who was born in 1886, remains one of the most unassuming as well as one of the most brilliant men of his generation. If the way in which he chose to express his rebellion brought him a small but enthusiastic body of readers, it was of quite a different order than the notoriety achieved by England's new generation of angry young men.

One of the chief forms Sassoon's rebellion took was a battle against the "establishment"—although it is as difficult to be precise about this phrase as it is to be precise about the reasons for the present cult of "looking back in anger." Looking back through some letters written by Wilfred Owen in a hospital on the Somme I came across a passage which I believe does much to explain what it was that Sassoon, who first launched his poetry, and he were both out to attack. Owen writes: "Christ is literally in 'no man's land.' There often men hear His voice; 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for a friend.' Is it spoken only in English and French? I do not believe so. Thus you see how pure Christianity will not fit in with pure patriotism."

This is a most searching argument, and in Sassoon's case (as in Owen's) it led to what might be said to be an equating of the Established Church of England with the War Office in Whitehall. State-patriotism was a religious matter. (I recall clearly that when I enlisted in 1942, if one did not subscribe to some faith or other, he could not be honest and register as a non-believer; the category did not exist and those that maintained that they were agnostics or atheists were automatically registered as members of the "C. of E.") Thus it is Sassoon bore a most noticeable hostility to bishops. Here is an extract from his *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer:* "My stretcher was popped into an ambulance which took me to a big hospital at Denmark Hill. At Charing Cross a woman handed me a bunch of flowers and a leaflet by the Bishop of London who earnestly advised me to lead a clean life and attend Holy Communion." His famous poem "They" ends with these four lines:

> "Poor Jim's shot through the lungs and like to die;
> And Bert's gone syphillitic: you'll not find
> A chap who's served that hasn't found *some* change."
> And the Bishop said: "The ways of God are strange!"

As the author himself has pointed out with a certain pride in a book of later memoirs, *Siegfried's Progress* published in 1946, he can claim to be the first English poet to have used the word "syphillitic." The note of rebellion has not dimmed with the years.

EVERY AUTHOR, it is frequently repeated, rewrites his first book. Sometimes critics even blame authors for writing in a vein or style which they have particularly made their own; and, curiously enough, this seems to be a practice confined largely to literary criticism. For seldom, if ever, do art critics condemn Constable for painting in the style of Constable, nor the English water-colorists such as Cox and Varley for painting the same kind of landscape a hundred times. So often has Sassoon written about the same kind of scene that it is possible to put together a sort of composite picture. In it will be heard the gruff voices of gardeners and of jays squawking among the

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peas; there will be the steady trot of the horses coming up the drive with their groom, followed by their stamping and snorting as they wait for the young master to ride to hounds. Or, later in the year, there will be heard a scythe being sharpened upon a stone and the mowing of the long summer grass; the white pigeons will be cooing to each other, pecking the maize while all the time the rumble of a wheelbarrow draws ever nearer . . .

The book may be *The Weald of Youth, The Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man,* or *The Old Century;* in each of them there is this close attention to sound. And if the prose of such a poet evokes landscape rather than scenes of action, there is that memorable apologia, "Dream-Led Youth," about how little "most of us remember . . . of what we have read," since "to open almost any book a second time is to be reminded that we had forgotten well-nigh everything that the writer told us. Parting from the narrator and his narrative, we retain only a fading impression; and he, as it were, takes the book away from us and tucks it under his arm. Thus, for the great majority, these words will pass by, even as my figure vanishes on that foot-path over the fields."

I HAVE been opening many of Sassoon's books a second time after a lapse of some fifteen years or more, and I can still remember how the irony of one description first struck me when, during an air raid on London, I read of the preparations for a trench raid on the Western front. "Entering the other dug-out," the piece begins, "I was slightly startled, for I had forgotten that the raiders were to have blacked faces (to avoid the danger of their mistaking one another for Germans). Exchanging boisterous jokes, they were putting the finishing touches to their make-up with bits of burnt cork . . . . Everyone seemed to expect the entertainment to be *a roaring success.*" Those three italicized words I had underlined; they were an irony singularly in keeping with a *blitzkrieg.*

Yet today, more than fifteen years later, it is not the pieces of irony that hold their strength so much as the quieter, more reflective passages—visits to old churchyards or the delights of cricket played on village greens against a background of elms, chestnuts, beeches or limes. On one occasion after the first world war, Sir Edmund Gosse declared that Sassoon was harping on something best forgotten—a foolish jibe, since had Sassoon acted upon such advice it would have been to deny his deepest convictions. Knaves and fools and hypocrites had served in office before and unless those who had caused so much useless slaughter under the camouflage of being part of the establishment were brought to book in chapter and verse, *especially in verse,* the chances were that the same follies would be repeated.

And when there occurred the possiblity that they would be repeated after 1939, there was for a legacy the encouragement and example of those who had once before in the same century stood out against a blind acceptance and patriotism. Frank Swinnerton has suggested that as a result of Sassoon's war poems there grew up a feeling among the young that anyone over forty must be a fool or a knave or a hypocrite. This obvious exaggeration is more easy to understand now because of the post-war emergence of the present generation of angry young men.

Indeed, to put forward this parallel might look like saying that history repeats itself, which is true in the sense that the anger and rebellion of one generation derives a strength from remembering the angry or rebellious of previous generations. But of course there will be differences in the temper of the anger. Enlightenment is never prodigal and what distinguishes the early anger of the writers of the Sassoon, Blunden and Robert Graves generation from that of the present John Osborne, Amis, Wain and Colin Wilson generation is the style of the anger; and by style I mean the language as well as the expression of it.

Each poet of the first group had an acute sense of vision and found the exact words to express it; there was no common vocabulary so that no juxtapositions could be brought about by taking the lines of one writer and adding them to those of another, since that particular kind of trick, which Cyril Connolly so engagingly displayed in the thirties and which could as easily be performed now, would never have worked then. For this reason, I would stress the significance of Sassoon's last volume of poems which appeared last year. *Sequences* contains three sequences of poems, falling under the headings: "Common Chords," "Emblems of Experience" and "The Tasking." Each of these has been composed since 1947 (when his *Collected Poems* were published) and each sequence has been privately printed for friends, a practice which this particular poet has been fond of indulging in. "The Tasking," with which the third sequence begins, is a short eight-line poem.

To find rewards of mind with inward ear
Through silent hours of seeking;
To put world sounds behind and hope to hear
Instructed spirit speaking:
Sometimes to catch a clue from selfhood's essence
And ever that revealment to be asking;
This—and through darkness to divine God's presence—
I take to be my tasking.

Never before has Sassoon come so near to a definition of his aims. Prior to this, there had just been clues: "Be at your best, vision enchanting, I cry" is an exhortation from *The Old Century;* in this same book and

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throughout his work there are these entries that seem to have slipped from a poet's notebooks into his prose volumes, volumes whose publication has tended to eclipse temporarily the poet behind them. *The Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man* was awarded the Hawthornden Prize in 1929, and last year it was pleasing to see attention slipping back to the verse when he was awarded for *Sequences* the Queen's Medal for Poetry.

IF AT FIFTY poets look back at their childhood, at seventy they are often more inclined to look back at their youth. This subtle distinction is apparent in nearly all Sassoon's recent poetry in which there has been a noticeable quickening of the poetic pulses and a deepening in the translation of experience. There is a temptation to say that the poetry has become an intensified search—but this is something that could be said of all serious poetry. Were it added, however, that the poetry was also an attempt to say many things at one and the same time and so incorporate divers types of searching, it would be an estimate far nearer the complete truth.

The problems once framed asked if patriotism and religion were interchangeable, if the Germans were "Anti-Christ," or if God spoke French and English exclusively. These were the questions of a fighter—and they persist now, even if they are differently framed. In *Counter-Attack* and the war poems of 1915-17, they were the questions of the man who would make a decision to enlist with the same degree of forethought and conscientious reflection as another would declare himself a convinced pacifist. Such free or liberal-minded men will respect each other's decisions and in peace-time it is because of such men that a climate of genuine creative thinking is realized.

Yet the era of the atom bomb, now followed by that of the hydrogen bomb, has introduced fresh factors into any serious consideration of war; it has opened up such horizons of horror that it has intensified the search for an order or system that will prevent such potential chaos. In Sassoon's case, it would seem that the possibility of Hiroshima and Nagasaki being repeated has caused him to think of the inherent chaos in the jungle and to ask how God can justify "fang, swamp and claw." The thinking recalls the infantry officer in the trenches who wondered then how to justify the use of a Mills bomb or a hand grenade. And now, thirty years later, comes an answer, an answer which may have foreshadowed his entrance into the Church last autumn: the problem can be resolved in the mystery of "unapprehended grace"—the words which end one of his latest poems. Between the natural acceptance of the chaos in the jungle and the knowledge of the horrors that men can devise, between "the solar system and the ape," must be made an act of affirmation, since "on such rough road must faith endure its trial . . ."

THE STAGE

THE FIELD OF VANITY II

THE ENGLISH STAGE COMPANY's production of "The Country Wife" is a very serious lapse indeed: common when it is not hysterical, and continuously boring. The attempt it makes to impose Wycherly's quality is never more than negligible, and one is moved to alarm that the technical means of representing Restoration sensibility may be withering even in the British tradition. We sketched last week some of the special hazards of "The Country Wife": its primacy as a farce of situation, not character; the possibilities of offense; the dependence on a tone and image of male insolence. Since the scheme of Wycherly's play is dictated by a single anarchic intelligence, one must sense some fuse of wit and seductive *diablerie*: else the play's only deep irony—that of the clever Mr. Horner being hoist by his own cleverness—will be undone. Mr. Laurence Harvey, a romantic player of graceful ease, has not the kind of insinuating presence demanded by this task; there is, moreover, a naive limitation to his knowledge of the pressures imposed by lust (which Sterne, after all, called the most *serious* of emotions). Mr. Harvey wants all vigilant calculation of opportunity and malicious relish; he implies no comment of *wit* on his performance, making do rather with a varnish of la-di-da frippery, gutted and weary, which is a sad thing of externals only, and which he has not the imaginative power (as does Mr. Cyril Ritchard) to project into a bizarre coherence of style. The nature of Restoration society, and indeed of any decaying society of privilege, is revealed in a tension between appetite and form: men bred in such a tradition follow a pattern of lordliness in their pleasures, and discreet vulgarity; vain in a realistic age, romanticism softens them into sentimentality, but under the sinuous grace, the nerve of brutality is always knotted. (Flaubert's Rudolphe Boulanger in *Madame Bovary* is a brilliant study.) To represent such mundane figures as enervated and innocuous is a failure of perception, for any attentive observer of social history knows quite the opposite to be true: yet this is but another smear in the general blur of Mr. Harvey's performance. He is not alone, moreover, being surrounded by callow young men, badly made-up for the period, who do not walk or carry themselves with distinction, and who wear without elegance clothes which have no elegance.

Miss Julie Harris gives an exhibition over which one could not linger with grace: what leers and bottom-wagglings, what rolling eyeballs ("Get *me*!" as Miss Beatrice Lillie used to say) and desperate "inventiveness"—strained throat cords and all—this actress has begun to substitute for perception. The whole embodies

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a vaudeville idea of rusticity, which is vulgar when it is not patronizing, and which, if it reflects a personal conception, is a serious comment on Miss Harris' sensibility; if she has adopted it at the persuasion, of another, she is badly advised. We may instance of one of the incomprehensibly wrong strokes of Miss Harris' performance, her playing of the famous Letter Scene, always charming and fresh in the quality Wycherly has imagined for it. The country wife is writing her surreptitious entreaty to Mr. Horner with a quill pen, and any gull knows the quill to be an instrument of delicacy. Miss Harris, however, wields it like a poleax, jabbing repeatedly at the parchment with a wild glee which is too painful to recollect, and which quite demolishes the pleasure of the scene. Such are the sad concessions which our theatre makes to audience response, *any* response, no matter how indiscriminate or improper.

Miss Pamela Brown is not involved in her role—indeed, her boredom with it is palpable—but her movement has style, and she challenges nature with her implausible beauty. What is more, her delivery of several passages—"Pray do not be smutty, or I shall hate you," for example—has a lustrous indifference which makes them seem liquid elegance, worthy of Congreve. Miss Brown joins two other ladies of fashion for a last-act drinking ballad—it might be out of "The Beggar's Opera"—and the moment has immense *élan*; it suggests the musical stage as a final refuge for "The Country Wife."

I wish I might say something about the total want, in this production, of any sense of the pictorial, of points of reference—images and allusions drawn from painting, perhaps—which would anchor Wycherly's farce of arid manners in a social world tangible, known, visually to be recognized. But that could involve me in areas where I am reluctant to wander without a wider competence.

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

BRINY

EXPERTLY produced and directed by Dick Powell, "The Enemy Below" deals with a duel between an American escort destroyer and a German submarine. Although the script, written by Wendell Mayes from Commander D. A. Rayner's exciting novel, is rather talky for an action picture, it also has plenty of movement. And once Director Powell gets over all the explanatory dialogue and close-ups of buttons being pushed, gauges being examined and gadgets being maneuvered, he gives us a plethora of thrills.

He also gives us some interesting characterizations, especially in the two lead roles: the duel between the destroyer and sub becomes a battle of wits between the two commanders, excellently played by Robert Mitchum and Curt Jurgens. Neither of the skippers bears great malice toward the enemy. As the American whose last ship was torpedoed under him, Mitchum portrays a man who knows what is expected of him and does well what he has to. Jurgens' performance as the war-weary German has philosophical undertones; thoroughly disillusioned with Hitler and complaining that the human error has been taken out of this mechanized warfare, he still does his best to win the battle and save his men. "The Enemy Below" concentrates on the duel but never treats the men as just pawns in a game.

DONE ON an even bigger scale is the English "Pursuit of the Graf Spee," a handsome Vista-Vision and Technicolor picture written, produced and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. In telling the historic tale of the 1939 German pocket battleship, the hunter that became the hunted when pursued by three British cruisers, this film also tells of exciting chases as well as battles of wits between commanders. Outstanding in the large and good cast are Peter Finch as Captain Langsdorff of the *Graf Spee;* John Gregson, Ian Hunter, Jack Gwillim as commanders of the British *Exeter, Ajax* and *Achilles*; Bernard Lee as the captain of a British tanker sunk by Langsdorff; Anthony Quayle as the British commodore; and, when the action moves to Montevideo where the diplomatic battle takes place after the *Spee* is crippled, Peter Illing as Uruguay's Foreign Minister and Anthony Bushell as the British Minister. Although the roles are well-played, especially those by Finch and Gregson, the film as a whole suffers from lack of personal touch. The picture is like a grand historical pageant with cheers for our side, respect for a brave enemy and plenty of seascapes and battle scenes building up to the finale which is supposed to be suspenseful but isn't because we all know the *Graf Spee* will be scuttled. Moviegoers who like their historical films big, nautical and accurate should find "The Pursuit of the Graf Spee" right up their alley.

AUDIENCES may even like "The Deep Six," in which Alan Ladd plays a commercial artist who belongs to the Naval Reserve and finds himself ordered to active duty on a destroyer in 1942. The picture is kind of a Rover Boys affair with lots of action and not much sense, but it does try for a while to tussle with an interesting moral and psychological problem. Our commercial artist is, or was, a Quaker, and as gunnery officer finds he cannot give the necessary commands to fire on a passing plane. Unfortunately

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this situation is not very well thought out. Even though the passing plane turns out to be American, the men label Alan a coward; and Alan, himself, gets over his reluctance toward fighting when he engages in fisticuffs with a group of merchant seamen. Equally confused is the character played by Keenan Wynn; this officer who is hell-bent to kill as many of the enemy as possible suddenly starts stealing narcotics from sick bay. Also in the cast are James Whitmore, William Bendix, Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., Dianne Foster (as romantic interest). Pictures like "The Deep Six" should help end the war cycle quickly.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE VISION OF CHRISTOPHER DAWSON"

Ottawa, Ontario

TO THE EDITORS: Frederick Wilhelmsen's article, "The Vision of Christopher Dawson" [Jan. 3], has that inflated, partisan and rather obscure tone which seems out of place within the pages of The Commonweal, though it was pleasant to note that one of the editors has very gently restored the balance by some pertinent remarks in the same issue.

The word "Dynamics" in the title of the Dawson anthology commented on by Mr. Wilhelmsen is now being used very consistently in ambitious books on psychology and sociology, probably because the word has distinctly scientific connotations. But it is difficult to appreciate the scientific quality of Dawson's work from what Mr. Wilhelmsen has to say; the impression is given that Mr. Dawson writes flamboyant theses combining erudition and some wise analysis with flashy phraseology designed to dazzle the mind into accepting the idea that to be medieval and Augustinian in sympathies is to be essentially Catholic and possessed of a "sense of history."

One might even be led to believe that to have a rational mind is to be "bourgeois" and to be in imminent danger of committing the "original sin of the intellectual mind: rationalism." Far safer then to take refuge in the "baroque" from the burden of being understandable and understanding, in the magnificently senseless from the burden of making sense.

This word "baroque" with which Mr. Wilhelmsen makes much play, he associates with the idea: "All for love and the world well lost." Within the context of the whole article it is perhaps not too exaggerated to paraphrase it thus: To gain an understanding of all, try not to understand anything—sense it instead. For Dawson apparently does not realize the necessity of referring the subjective to the objective to avoid the horror of unreason in the name of God which often blackened the pages of medieval history. He believes (to quote Mr. Wilhelmsen) that: "Some men simply see the heart of a culture and some do not. . . . The difference between seeing and not seeing can be reduced to nothing more fundamental than the opposition between sight and blindness." But how then are we to decide who is seeing and who not seeing except by reference to the facts?

In order to be at home in the past (to "walk again with Augustine") Dawson has apparently allowed to crystallize a congenital lack of sympathy with the present, so that instead of being a constructive force he must confine himself to "carefully worded strictures against modern industrial civilization." This, if true, adds Dawson to the infamous list of men like T. S. Eliot who are negative figures in the heroic effort being made today to break through the "sound barrier" of disruption and chaos induced by rapid change into an era in which rapid change becomes consistent with living a human life. To gain the courage to participate in this struggle we must be enthusiastically committed to our time; furthermore we must refuse to acknowledge the ridiculous idea that the City of Man is "sharply set off" from the City of God, because only Hell can be that.

To the Christian mind of the mid-20th Century familiar with the philosophy of science, God is just as much, if not more, manifest in "laws and causal sequences" as in "contradictions" and "chance." This is just one of the many important insights by which we have an advantage over the medieval mind. Let's not belittle what we have because someone flashes esoteric concepts such as: "The metaphysics of time, the meaning of memory as the prism of history. . . ."; "the embodiment of the spirit in the womb of the world"; "the sexual dimension of the human spirit"; "Existence is the catalyzer of essences." Undoubtedly they mean something but their significance is vitiated by a brutal sacrifice of intelligibility for effect.

PHILIP BELGRAVE.

MORE ON NUCLEAR WAR

Lansdowne, Pa.

TO THE EDITORS: To continue the discussions which Mr. John Cogley has originated in his columns in the issues of December 13, 20 and January 3 seems tragically necessary. As Mr. Cogley states, not "even the best theologians have yet begun to deal with the realities" we all face. Still, for further discussions to be fruitful, a detached and logical assessment of the full structure of the problem becomes necessary.

First, regarding the problem raised in the issue of December 13, do the traditional criteria for a just

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war any longer have a meaning? Is modern war between peoples and not between armies? Has the essential nature of warfare changed thus requiring a total reapplication of moral principles? Or have we merely allowed our thinking to grow fuzzy in the interest of doing what we wish?

The possibilities resulting from discussion here seem to be threefold at least. If the traditional criteria are inapplicable and modern warfare and even the use of nuclear weapons are theoretically justified, there must still remain the problem of determining whether there will be any moral proportion between the evil done by such a war and the good resulting from it. This is the problem raised in the issue of December 20. Again, we may find that modern warfare is essentially evil even when waged without nuclear weapons. However, if the traditional criteria are found applicable it seems apparent, even to the layman, that a modern war will be found, inescapably, to be immoral.

Second, supposing, for whatever reason, modern warfare, i.e. warfare involving nuclear weapons or obliteration bombing, is found to be morally unjustifiable, we are presented with a whole new set of problems. Incidentally, our very unwillingness to consider the morality of modern war argues our suspicion that it cannot be justified.

These problems are the ones to which Mr. Cogley calls attention dramatically in his column of January 3. They are the moral problems surrounding what he calls "mass suicide."

A momentary digression seems in order to deal with such an arresting term as "mass suicide." A term with immediate moral connotations, it is both misleading and highly charged emotionally. To refuse to wage nuclear war in the present situation might well be tantamount to surrendering national independence, political suicide. Such an act, however, is moral or immoral only in its final purpose, not in itself.

Presuming again that waging modern war is found to be immoral, what are the moral possibilities for action left open to us? Can we continue to possess the necessary means of, and thus threaten to wage, a modern war and so take the calculated risk of precipitating such a war? Are we warranted in presuming a sufficient degree of control over our political and military establishment, indeed a sufficient self-control, to make even the possession of such armaments moral?

Or considering it morally necessary to completely disavow and destroy our capacity to wage modern war, in the present situation, may we legitimately resort to military defense by traditionally acceptable means.

Finally, have we reached a point in man's history where the only morally possible defense of the values of truth, freedom, property and religion must lie in the moral and spiritual resistance of each individual.

The above seem to be the major moral questions of the problem Mr. Cogley has raised. They are awesome questions. We can well agree with him that theologians need to become concerned with them. In the face of the catastrophe that threatens we can act only on the knowledge we have.

BERNARD F. REILLY.

LEBRETON'S "LIFE OF CHRIST"

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: Father Ignatius Hunt's review [Jan. 10] of *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ* by Father Jules Lebreton was in many ways interesting and informative.

There was no justifiable ground, however, for the reviewer to express a suspicion that "the publishers made an effort to conceal . . . . (the) fact" that the work is a reprint. It was even more surprising to note that "everything," in the opinion of Father Hunt, "is aimed at making the book look like an up-to-date 1957 product." Said Father Hunt: "It seems unfair to reprint this volume without making it clear to the prospective buyer that it is precisely a reprint, and one that has not been in any way revised."

May I bring to the attention of both your reviewer and your readers the following statement which appears on the jacket of this volume and which sufficiently describes the nature of the work: "First published in 1935 in two volumes, the present volume was reissued in a one volume edition in 1949."

The work was not precisely a reprint, but rather a reissue, of a formerly published book. The volume's *imprimatur* was printed as it was given, with the date in roman numerals, according to the custom of the Diocese of Westminster. It is regrettable that the reviewer was as unaware of this practice as he was unmindful of the preceding point. Surely the publisher has no more the right to modify the form of the imprimatur than he has the obligation to state "unrevised" after the title of each book he reissues.

As Father Hunt observed, "Lebreton's Life of Christ has come to be regarded as a classic, standing alongside the best writings of its kind." We agree with Father Hunt. It was precisely for this reason that the work was reissued.

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A Satisfying Confrontation of Mystery

THE SIBYL. By Par Lagerkvist. Translated by Naomi Walford. Random House. $3.

By PHILIP DEASY

OF THE TWO memorable novels of Par Langerkvist previously translated for American readers, *The Dwarf* and *Barabbas,* it was justly noted that Sweden's Nobel laureate (1951) revealed in his work "a magnificent fusion of the purely speculative instinct and the intense artistic vision." *The Sibyl* is another such compelling fusion, another probing of the human soul. Like its predecessors *The Sibyl* is short; it is set far in the past, its form that of the parable, its style (superbly translated by Naomi Walford) spare and limpid, deceptively simple for a novel of *The Sibyl's* profundity.

Par Langerkvist is an artist of such classic stature that he can felicitously blend in a short space an extraordinarily absorbing story, poetry's haunting quality of old, unhappy, far-off things, shattering dramatic effects, a protagonist of great warmth, charm and power, and, transcending all, thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow act. In short, for those whose faith in the novel as a living art form needs quickening ("the serious novel," as Granville Hicks calls it in his symposium on the subject) *The Sibyl* is unreservedly recommended.

The story of *The Sibyl* is told in a long dialogue between the Sibyl herself, long before a temple priestess, now an old woman living with her idiot son on the mountain overlooking Delphi, and The Traveler, who has come to her with a question the Delphi oracle cannot answer. (All characters in the novel are unnamed.) Because he has been condemned to spend eternity wandering restlessly about the earth the Traveler wants to know his ultimate destiny.

He describes to the Sibyl how one day a man dragging his cross on his way to execution had leaned his head in exhaustion against the wall of the Traveler's house. When the Traveler tells him in exasperation to move on, the man, with a look "mighty and terrible," tells the Traveler that for his lack of charity his soul "shall be unblessed; he shall never die." From that moment in an indefinite long ago the Traveler has suffered the full weight of his affliction. He has heard long since that the mysterious cross-carrying man is reputedly the Son of God, that He had, in fact, arisen after His death by crucifixion and later had bodily ascended into heaven. It is thus clear to the Traveler that his suffering has been inflicted by a Divinity, and that therefore it is the more inexplicable.

The Sibyl's answer to the Traveler is to tell her own story of affliction by another kind of divinity, the goat-god in whose service she had consecrated herself as a young, unlettered peasant girl. Incredible, almost unspeakable, are the functions she performs for many years in the dark, foul-smelling Holy of Holies room of the temple, where she is the god's mouthpiece uttering in her delirium prophecies interpreted by the temple's priests for the thronging pilgrims who come to Delphi on the god's festival days. Then during a period after her mother's death when she has returned to her father's home, she meets and falls in love with a soldier who has returned, one-armed, from the wars.

This the priests of the temple will not permit, and one day the lover is found, shattered and drowned, in the river near his farm. When later it is discovered that the pythia, or priestess, is pregnant, that she has thus committed an unmentionable offense against god, the temple and sacred Delphi, a great crowd gathers outside the temple to put her to death. When the girl decides to face her prosecutors they are afraid to touch her. She flees to the mountain and for months lives like a wild savage. Then at the height of a summer storm in a cave where she had taken refuge, and attended by innumerable goats who have for long mysteriously followed her, the Sibyl gives birth to her idiot babe.

Since then she has lived in isolation in the slope above Delphi in her single-roomed house, one wall of which was the mountain side itself, and within which her idiot son perpetually sits, the queer smile always on his unlined face. When the old woman finishes her story one last event of the novel remains: the disappearance of the son up the trail leading into the mountain's eternal snows.

Teased out of thought as the reader is certain to be by a novel that unflinchingly comes to grips with the deepest implications of the human condition, by the symbolic significance of so many of the novel's personages and objects, one communication is dominant. *The Sibyl* makes a statement about God and the mystery of God's relations with human beings, of His impact on human experience—and with the truth that man's fate is inextricably intertwined with the fact of God's existence. *The Sibyl* is a fictional rendering of what Father Jean Daniélou wrote some months ago in The Commonweal: "A God who was entirely intelligible to man would surely not be the true God." As the Sibyl says in the novel's closing pages, He is "full of a meaning which we can never perceive yet never cease to puzzle over. A riddle which is intended not to be solved but to exist. To exist for us always. To trouble us always."

As a character study, fully and convincingly individualized as she is, the Sibyl is also of a magnitude vast enough to symbolize Womanhood itself, the feminine principle in Life, of receptivity to all experience both human and divine, of an almost infinite capacity for loving and being loved. To a much lesser degree the Traveler is the average, sensual, selfish man who seeks Woman's wisdom. Also to be noted is the charming effectiveness of the

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portraits of the Sibyl's parents, the cheerful, always helpful little manservant of the oracle, selfless and happy in his god's service, and by contrast, the old oracle servant woman incessantly prattling of the baseness of Delphi, the sham of the temple's priests, the licentiousness attending the great festivals.

American Catholics were reminded during the past year that they must learn to admit and accept "the nagging existence of mystery." A ruminative reading of *The Sibyl* provides, among other pleasures of style, a story that is an asthetically satisfying confrontation of mystery.

Rediscovery

SELECTED WRITINGS OF GÉRARD DE NERVAL. Translated with a Critical Introduction and Notes by Geoffrey Wagner. Grove. $3.75.

By VIVIAN MERCIER

SO FAR as I can discover, this is the first English translation of Nerval since Richard Aldington's selection, published in 1932. It is only right that Nerval should be rediscovered for the English-speaking public at least once in every generation, because he has so much in common with two of our most admired poets, Yeats and Blake. Mr. Wagner points out the affinity with Yeats in a note to one of Nerval's poems and has, perhaps unconsciously, imparted an occasional Yeatsian cadence to his translation of *Aurélia,* a prose reminiscence which often recalls the Irishman's *A Vision.* I doubt that Nerval, whose dates are 1808-1855, ever heard of Blake or his work, which was neglected in England until about 1860. Nor can I find conclusive evidence that Yeats read Nerval. It is rather their common interest in such subjects as Swedenborgianism, alchemy, the cabala, and Eastern religions that underlies the similarities in the creative work of all three.

Aurélia, a sort of diary of the poet's insane spells, shows us visions which correspond to the intellectual preoccupations of his sane periods. In the words of Henri Clouard, Nerval "always liked to dream of the transfusion of souls, sought all his life . . . for an ideal beloved . . . and believed he recognized—across the dynasties of the Egyptian gods, the Eleusinian mysteries, the Pythagorean numbers, the oracles of Delphi, the cult of Isis, the Passion of Christ, the cult of the Virgin Mary—a permanent mystical hope in contact with a celestial Mother . . . whose child is the hope of the world. Delivered from the control of reason, Gérard de Nerval gave his dreams reality, lived his ideas of theogony, went so far as to confound his Eternal Feminine with the Divinity."

Much in Nerval's thought anticipates both C. G. Jung's psychological theories and the anthropological ones developed in J G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough.* Much also harks back to earlier Christian mysticism; though Nerval died by his own hand, he regarded himself as a Christian in his later years.

The Surrealists made Nerval one of their hallowed ancestors because of his determined efforts to record his irrational states of mind in *Aurélia.* No doubt they echoed his plaintive cry at the beginning of that work: "In recovering what men call reason, do I have to regret the loss of those joys."

The poetry of *Chimères* and *Autres Chimères,* dating from approximately the same period as *Aurélia,* unfolds a private mythology which incorporates real or fancied incidents of the poet's life into his sweeping vision of world history. Particular allusions, like *Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie,* which T. S. Eliot borrowed for *The Waste Land,* may be hard to pin down—Mr. Wagner gives some excellent hints on such points in his notes—but the basic religious and philosophical concepts of these poems are clearly those exemplified in *Aurélia.*

Mr. Wagner translates a bigger selection—twenty-five in all—from these and earlier poems than I have seen before in English. The French text is printed facing the English, for which Mr. Wagner modestly claims that it "is meant simply to give a reasonably literal rendering, with something of Nerval's feeling, which will refer the reader to the original. . . ." Whatever one's views about the content of some of them, the original poems are virtually all acknowledged masterpieces of versification and frequently revealed new possibilities of vowel and consonantal harmony in the French language.

All in all, Mr. Wagner's choice of prose and verse is impeccable except for a tedious and dated short story, "Émilie." I found the introduction helpful but somewhat diffuse, as if Mr. Wagner knew more about Nerval than he could possibly condense within the space available. This fault, if fault it be, becomes a virtue in the very informative notes to both prose and poetry; at every step Mr. Wagner keeps us aware of just what is real and what imagined in Nerval's writings, which are almost always semi- or pseudo-autobiographical.

Of all Nerval's works, *Sylvie* is unquestionably the best known and the greatest, one of those classic short novels which bejewel French fiction. We tend to forget that in a literary tradition so famous for its tales of guilty love there lies imbedded a counter-tradition which tells of platonic love, poignant with shyness and unfulfilment: *Sylvie,* Fromentin's *Dominique,* and Gide's *Strait Is the Gate* by no means exhaust the list of such novels. Anyone who has not read *Sylvie* has missed one of the purest joys literature can bestow in spite of one or two errors such as creep into even the best translations. Mr. Wagner has notably succeeded in capturing its elusive poetic enchantment.

A Dreaded Circle

BEST TELEVISION PLAYS 1957. Edited by William I. Kaufman. Harcourt. $5.75.

By EDWARD GREENFIELD SCHWARTZ

TO HAVE great television dramatists, you must have

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great audiences—perhaps not great in quality, in heart and mind, as Walt Whitman hoped the poet's audience might be, but great in number. The seven dramatists published in *Best Television Plays 1957* are products of our recent modification of Whitman's adage. Their plays are competent mellow dramas, slick, effective, and occasionally entertaining. All but one of the plays pose problems significant to the man-on-the-street, amenable to common-sense solutions that can be understood by all men, not just by intellectuals.

Evidently significant to intellectuals, too, these plays were nominated for the Harcourt, Brace Awards, as the prizes for the top three plays henceforth will be known, by distinguished university professors and selected by even more distinguished judges. Impressed, the publisher claims "a place in contemporary American literature" for the anthology.

Winner of the first prize, Rod Serling's *Requiem for a Heavyweight* is about a battered pug's search for a job and a new life after fourteen years in the ring. By far the outstanding play in the anthology, *Requiem for a Heavyweight* looks much better than it reads. Caught up by the magic of the spectacle, the television audience may not notice the tricks, the clichés, the stereotypes that give away the speciousness of the play. But once the text is before us, we realize that the characters have but one function—to reveal the brutality of boxing. The theme is obtrusive; plot, character, language are secondary to it. Right-minded Serling may very well be; seriously artistic he most surely is not.

Right-mindedness is an important ingredient in these prize plays. It may be defined as the mind's receptiveness to the slogans and clichés of a petty bourgeois morality. It implies a willingness to accept the ready-made solution, the formula, the hand-me-down morality. In Steven Gethers' *Cracker Money*, the second-prize play, a devoted teacher's financial and personal problems are resolved when he learns the need for tolerance and practical compromise from his son, a successful high school football player. Too narrow in his interests to pass an examination for assistant principal, the teacher-father does have the integrity to refuse rebates on crackers sold to his students. But his integrity, though admirable, is hardly more valuable than the ability to adjust, to be well-rounded and successful like his son. Intended to deal in a liberal way with the underpaid teacher whose problem is not entirely financial but partly self-imposed, *Cracker Money* is a kind of hoax. Not only are the popular teacher and his goody-goody pal-wife rather sticky stereotypes, but the contrast between the unsuccessful, narrow teacher-father and the successful, right-minded hero-son lacks precision and real meaning.

Tad Mosel's *The Five Dollar Bill*, the third-prize play, is another of those dull affairs in which a father achieves self-discovery through his more sensitive son. The new twist in this play is that the parent's enlightenment comes not as the result of his own immediate failure, but of his son's. An obnoxious, self-righteous adolescent who is supposed to be a Thoreau enthusiast, the son steals a five-dollar bill, causing father to wonder what it is that makes so upright a boy go astray. It turns out (we learn from the psychologist-son) that daddy had been frustrated by his failure to be accepted by the army during the war, had made his family call him "Major" instead of "Dad," had thereby alienated his son's affections. But all ends happily, and the boy gets to call his daddy Dad.

Published in alphabetical order, the four also-rans in the anthology are Alvin Boretz's *The Trial of Poznan*, Alfred Brenner's *Survival*, Alvin Sapinsley's *Lee at Gettysburg*, and Mac Shoub's *Thank You, Edmondo*. The first two are journalistic documentaries that tell their stories effectively, though without much imagination. The third, written in prosy blank verse, is an attempt to make human and heroic Lee's epic defeat at Gettysburg. The last is about a dead American soldier who, though dead, discovers why he died on a foreign battleground and salutes his benefactor, "Thank you, Edmondo."

Although *Best Television Plays 1957* is not of permanent interest, it attests the remarkable technical advances made by television playwrights since the end of the second world war. With the exception of *Lee at Gettysburg*, these plays work as television vehicles. Their authors are deft technicians who understand the resources of the television camera and stage. But so long as the merit of their work is to be determined by the quantity of viewers, their skill is likely to be vacuous. Such skill, used to write plays having mass appeal, may itself become warped by its lack of concern for the simple verities of human living. As for the television viewer, his sensibilities can hardly be enlarged by dramas that rely upon clichés, stereotypes, and phony resolutions. Conditioned by the television dramatist, the audience is both the victim and the victimizer of the writer. To break the dreaded circle, only a charm as powerful as Odysseus' moly will suffice.

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THE OPEN SEA. By William Meredith. Knopf. $3.50.

By MARY SHIRAS

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Tell how comeliness I can't take in
Of ships and other figures of content
Compels me still until I give them names;"

These lines of the Envoi, that opens William Meredith's second volume of verse, *Ships and Other Figures* (1948) could also conduct this present volume—his third—as appropriately. Figures of content are still the subjects of his poems, and still, in the same cultivated language, he gives them names. There is a ship, a bridge, a cathedral, some trees and islands, a few animals, and a number of people, both strangers and friends.

Beyond his characteristically smooth iambic rhythms and measured stanzas, usually in rhyme, the range of Mr. Meredith's verse forms includes some imitations of the Haiku and modern adaptations of ballads and sonnets; his cultivated conversation lapses easily and frequently into good everyday speech. His talent tends toward controlled, disciplined poetry which is neither austere nor excessively mannered. Traces of Blake, Yeats, of Auden and Robert Frost show that Mr. Meredith keeps good company, but his output is so thin and spare that one intuitively places him among all the other reasonably competent anonymities who at some time have been published in the Yale Series of Younger Poets.

As one reads these poems, it is the figure of content that touches and re-touches the sensibilities: there are no extremes and very few intense feelings of any kind; no places are brutalized by machines or tyrants; no one is wretched or fascinating or contemptible. The world, unlike the dreadful ones we usually hear about, is on the whole a quiet, pleasant place; it needs no veils of romance to allure its inhabitants, and its secrets are not so awful that we need view them through a darkened glass. Mr. Meredith speaks carefully and never hurriedly; his tone is mild. One of his poems describes a bachelor who, on rising, goes over the previous night's dream: "He takes the long view of toes

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in the bath tub/And shaves a man whose destiny is mild."

Certainly, calm has its perils, but Mr. Meredith is aware of them:

"Mildness can enervate as well as heat.
The soul must labor to reach paradise.
Many are detained in partial grace
Or partial penalty, for want of force."

Thus, he concludes in "A Major Work,"

"Poems are hard to read
Pictures are hard to see
Music is hard to hear
And people are hard to love
But whether from brute need
Or divine energy
At last mind eye and ear
And the great sloth heart will move."

At the end of the volume, the reader is assured that the mild tone does not hide a quavering heart; the self-control is easy and habitual; the discipline comes naturally. Mr. Meredith's choice of pleasant subjects is quite deliberate and is not blind to troubled waters below a surface calm. Only he has the good sense not to venture beyond his depths. It is fair enough to say that within his limited range he scores about an even number of losses and victories. Sometimes his intelligence insists too earnestly on a moral or an interesting little thought; sometimes the cultivated accents fall flat and stale; then he is dull and insipid rather than pleasant. Often his verse looks superficial because the meaning is so accessible and the ideas so unobjectionable, but on these occasions the real flaw is baldness.

One poem in this collection, "On Falling Asleep by Firelight" is so superior to the rest that it deserves special comment. The drowsy meditative mood gives an impression of genial calm; yet underneath, the mind is awake, pursuing subtle mental associations, reflecting; its idea is a profound one. Studying the ties of man and beast in a strange new light, the narrator envisions a kinship that was prophesied by Isaiah, ages ago "All we had thought unkind were all the while/ Alike, the firelight says and strikes us dumb;/ We dream there is no ravening or guile/ And take it kindly of the beasts to come/and suffer hospitality; the heat/ Turns softly on the hearth into that duct/ Isaiah said would be the serpent's meat." The diction is select, faintly archaic, with elegant puns and turns of phrase, and the lines move in a graceful, measured tread. Such beautifully wrought verse as this makes one wish that Mr. Meredith would come away from his quiet isle more often and try his hand at mildly sterner stuff.

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REVIEWERS

Philip Deasy, for many years a teacher of English literature, is a frequent contributor to The Commonweal.

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Mary Shiras is a translator and critic living in New York.

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